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The PBX-CPU connection • Beyond presentation graphics

Coping with IBM's rising maintenance fees

COMPUTER DECISIONS

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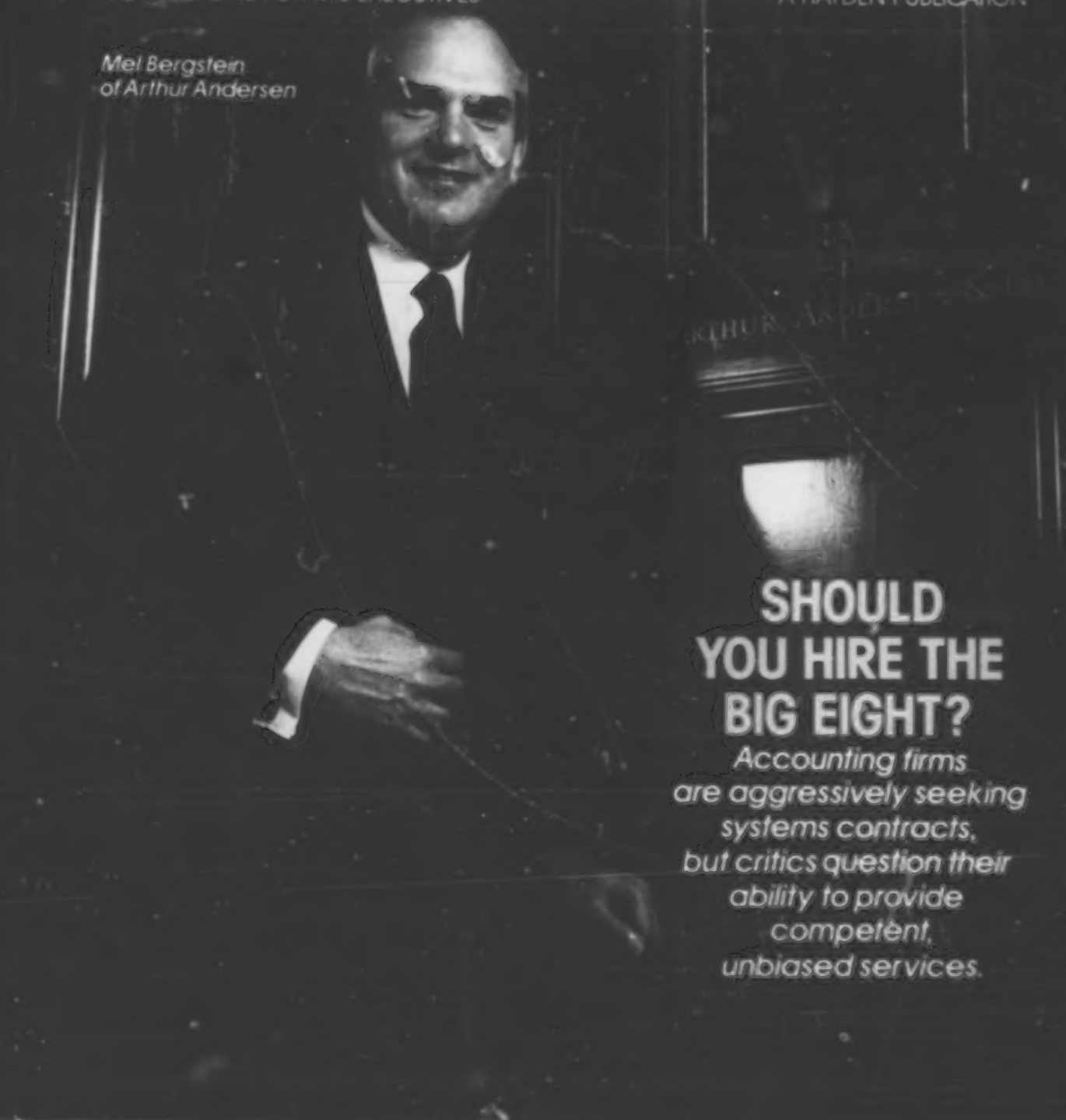

Mel Bergstein of Arthur Andersen

SHOULD YOU HIRE THE BIG EIGHT?

Accounting firms are aggressively seeking systems contracts, but critics question their ability to provide competent, unbiased services.

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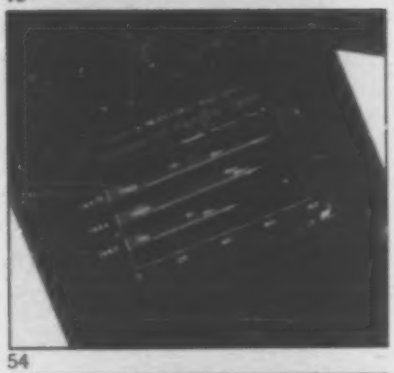

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Cover Photo: Richard Derk

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would have to train their employees only once to use any of the dictionaries.

Besides providing for this portability of skills, the proposal also calls for the portability of information between dictionaries. A dictionary-to-dictionary interface would allow the automatic transfer of all or part of a dictionary from one standard dictionary to another. Without a standard interface, such exchanges require customized interfaces between products or the rekeying of data. The dictionary-to-dictionary interface would also allow organizations to change dictionaries easily or share a dictionary's contents between installations using different dictionaries.

Pansophic Systems Inc. (Oak Brook, IL) has proposed an extension to the IRDS standard that would further reduce redundancy. Pansophic proposes the development of a standard application-to-dictionary interface that would allow applications to access different data dictionaries directly. Under the current proposed IRDS standard, an application would have to go through its own data dictionary to access a separate dictionary. David Carpenter, Pansophic's manager of product development and a representative to the X3H4 committee, says the software interface would be useful for products like Telon, Pansophic's application development system. Telon has an embedded dictionary, Carpenter says, "and we can write an interface to any other dictionary." However, such interfaces are difficult and expensive to develop. A standard application-to-dictionary interface would allow Telon and any other dictionary-based package to access any IRDS.

David Jefferson, manager of the database architecture group at NBS, says such access would allow a dictionary to actively participate in compiling programs and even to provide information when a program runs. While compiling a program, for example, a compiler could pull out required record or data element definitions from the appropriate dictionary. Without such a feature, programmers would have to write definitions into each program.

According to a source close to the IBM repository development group, the IBM repository would actively participate in the generation and regeneration of MVS systems and subsystems, such as DBMSs and teleprocessing monitors. To generate a system, a configuration's particular hardware and software elements must be defined. Changes to hardware or software—a new release of CICS, for example—require that the system be redefined. These jobs require considerable programmer effort and management organization, particularly since the architectures of the various subsystems don't mesh neatly.

At a recent conference sponsored by the Gartner Group Inc., a Stamford, CT, consultancy, Marilyn Bohl, product manager for IBM's DB2 relational DBMS, said DB2 will manage the repository. Bohl's revelation raises two questions: Will the repository require a full-function copy of DB2? And will users need the repository to generate MVS systems in the future?

Because the repository itself will be a database, its maintenance should require the same DBMS functionality as any other database; consequently the repository should need a complete version of DB2. In that case, if an organization installed the repository, the only bar to using the accompanying copy of DB2 for other databases would be some form of limited licensing agreement. If the repository were required for system generation, DB2 would be required for the system. At

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TOP 10 COMPUTERS

(Based on dollar value of U.S. installations)

SYSTEM	RANK: 7/85	RANK: 1/86	TOTAL VALUE*	SYSTEMS INSTALLED	PRICE**
IBM 3081	1	1	$4.653	1,551	$3
IBM 3084	2	4	4.076	627	6
IBM 4381	3	5	3.781	3,781	1
IBM 3083	4	3	3.458	1,729	2
IBM 3090	5	-	3.432	369	9.3
DEC VAX 11/70	6	2	3.353	16,765	.2
IBM S/36	7	7	3.196	39,947	.08
IBM S/38	8	8	2.149	8,956	.24
IBM 4341	9	6	1.886	5,240	.36
HP 3000	10	10	1.392	13,924	.1

**Installed base x purchase price in billions*
***Purchase price in millions*

Source: Computer Intelligence Corp.